

Message Text

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USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1893

EXDIS

CAPE TWON FOR EMBASSY

FROM LOW

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV RH US UK
SUBJ: RHODESIA: GRAHAM/LOW MEETING WITH ZANU/MUGABE CENTRAL
COMMITTEE - INTERNAL SECTION, SALISBURY, JUNE 13

1. GRAHAM AND I HAD PASSED ON TO THE REGIME (GAYLARD AND CLAYPOLE) THE REQUEST OF THE ZANU/MUGABE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT THAT THEY BE JOINED IN MAKING THEIR PRESENTATION TO US BY SIX MEMBERS OF THEIR CENTRAL COMMITTEE NOW IN DETENTION. WE WERE LATER INFORMED THAT THE REGIME WOULD FACILITATE SUCH A MEETING, WHICH WAS HELD ON TUESDAY, JUNE 13. NEARLY 20 MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT SHOWED UP AT MIRIMBA HOUSE
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AT ABOUT 10:30, FOLLOWED SHORTLY THEREAFTER BY A PADDY WAGON CONTAINING THE SIX DETAINEES. THE REUNION WAS NOISY AND EMOTIONAL, AND THE TWO GROUPS MET TOGETHER FOR 10 OR 15 MINUTES BEFORE OUR MEETING.

2. THEY BEGAN BY EXPRESSING THEIR THANKS TO US FOR THE MEETING AND ASKED GRAHAM FOR A REVIEW OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS. HE

DESCRIBED OUR PROPOSALS AND THEIR RECENT HISTORY, DISTRIBUTING COPIES OF THE WHITE PAPER WHICH THEY SAID THEY DID NOT HAVE. THEY THEN GAVE US A STATEMENT. THE STATEMENT INDICATED THAT THEY WERE WELL BRIEFED ON THE CURRENT STATE OF PATRIOTIC FRONT NEGOTIATIONS WITH US. IT BACKED THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS AS A BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS, AGREED TO AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE BUT EXPRESSED ITS "BELIEF" THAT A NUMBER OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN PREVIOUS TO SUCH CONFERENCE INCLUDING RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND DETAINEES.

3. GRAHAM REPLIED THAT WE COULD NOT ACCEPT PRECONDITIONS TO THE CONVENING OF AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE. EACH PARTY, HE SAID, MAY APPROACH IT FROM ITS OWN POSITION, BUT WE WOULD NEVER GET THERE IF EACH ATTACHED CONDITIONS. THE GROUP APPEARED TO AGREE WITH MY INTERPRETATION OF THEIR PAPER THAT THESE WERE EXPRESSIONS OF POSITION AND OPINION RATHER THAN HARD AND FAST PRECONDITIONS.

4. DURING THE REST OF THE CONVERSATION THEY EXPRESSED THEIR MANY FEARS AND RESERVATIONS ABOUT OUR POSITION, MAKING CLEAR IN EXPLICIT TERMS THAT THEY DID NOT TRUST THE BRITISH WHO THEY BELIEVED WERE ACTING WITH AND ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS. AT ONE POINT THEY PRODUCED A MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION OF AN OWEN-SITHOLE MEETING HELD IN LONDON (WHICH GRAHAM READ AND TOLD ME WAS PROBABLY A GENUINE RECORD BY SITHOLE'S PEOPLE). THEY SAID THEY WERE RELYING ON THE US TO CONFIDENTIAL

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KEEP THE BRITISH HONEST. THEY DID NOT YET DISTRUST THE US BUT WERE WORRIED THAT THEY WOULD SOON.

5. THEY ASKED WHETHER WE HAD A SEPARATE PROPOSAL WHICH WE WOULD TABLE AT THE ALL-PARTIES MEETING DIFFERENT FROM THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSAL. WE REASSURED THEM ON THIS AND SAID WE THOUGHT IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT WE WOULD PUT ANY PAPER DOWN BUT THAT THIS DEPENDED ON THE PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS. THEY WERE CRITICAL OF US FOR NOT CONDEMNING OUTRIGHT THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT AND WERE UNHAPPY WHEN GRAHAM MADE CLEAR THAT IF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT ACHIEVED A CEASEFIRE AND WAS ABLE TO CARRY OUT AN ELECTION IN WHICH THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE PARTICIPATED FREELY AND OPENLY THAT THE WORLD WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RECOGNIZE THIS. THEY CONTENDED THAT BY SAYING THIS WE WERE ENCOURAGING THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. WE MADE CLEAR THAT WE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS AS THE ONLY BASIS OF A SETTLEMENT WHICH WE COULD SEE WOULD WORK. IT APPEARED TO US THAT ONLY THROUGH A DIRECT MEETING BETWEEN THE PARTIES COULD A SETTLEMENT BE REACHED WHICH WOULD END THE HOSTILITIES AND MAKE POSSIBLE THE KIND OF AN ELECTION WE WERE TALKING ABOUT. THEY SAID THAT THE COUNTRY WAS AT WAR. IT WAS NECESSARY TO BRING THAT WAR TO AN END THROUGH

DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND THE SMITH REGIME ONLY. ANY OTHER DISCUSSIONS WERE IRRELEVANT. AFTER THE WAR WAS ENDED THEN ELECTIONS COULD TAKE PLACE IN WHICH ANYBODY MIGHT PARTICIPATE, BUT THIS WAS NOT A MATTER OF DISCUSSION NOW. WHEN WE ASKED THEM WHETHER THEY MEANT BY THIS THAT THEY WOULD NOT ATTEND AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING, HOWEVER, THEY BACKED AWAY AND REAFFIRMED THEIR AGREEMENT TO IT AND THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF PARTICIPATION BY THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS.

6. COMMENT: THIS WAS AN ARTICULATE AND WELL-INFORMED GROUP, INCLUDING THE INTERNAL ZANU/MUGABE MOVEMENT'S LEADER, REVEREND CANNON BANANA AND ENOS NKALA. THEY WERE UP TO DATE ON THE PF POSITION. THE DETAINEES WERE WELL DRESSED AND LOOKED IN GOOD SPIRITS AND HEALTH. THERE WAS ALSO A CONSIDERABLE PRESS INTEREST
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IN THE MEETING, STIMULATED BY PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT REPRESENTATIVES. WE WERE ONLY PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN KEEPING PRESS REPORTERS AND PARTICULARLY PHOTOGRAPHERS AWAY FROM THE EARLY PARTS OF THE MEETING, SINCE THEY ACCOMPANIED PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT REPRESENTATIVES.
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